

## ***Report to the Cabinet.***



***Report Reference: C-116-2007/08.  
Date of Meeting: 10 March 2008.***

**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services.**

**Subject: Essex Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 – ‘Liberating Potential’.**

**Responsible Officer: Steve Tautz (01992-564180).**

**Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992-564470).**

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### **Recommendations:**

- (1) That current progress with regard to the development of the second Local Area Agreement for Essex be noted: and**
- (2) That the Cabinet agree the priorities set out within the draft Local Area Agreement that the Council should specifically ‘have regard to’, and identify any additional local targets for possible inclusion in the agreement.**

### **Background:**

1. The Cabinet will recall that, at its meeting on 17 December 2007, members agreed the Epping Forest ‘Story of Place’ contribution for the second Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA).
2. The LAA is a contract between the government and local authorities and their partners such as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), intended to secure improvement across priority areas over a three year period, through enhanced partnership working and cooperation. The LAA scheme was first introduced in June 2004, and the second agreement for Essex is due to commence from April 2008. The Government expects all local authorities to participate in the LAA process, and the ‘Story of Place’ for the Epping Forest District (and the other second-tier Essex authorities) aimed to ensure that the new LAA properly reflected the diversity of the district and took local priorities into account.
3. The development of the new LAA is being lead by the Essex Partnership Forum, comprising representatives of all public sector agencies operating across the county. The Chairman of the Partnership Forum has recently written to all public sector partners, setting out progress with regard to the development of the second Essex LAA.
4. At its meeting on 10 December 2007, the Essex Partnership Forum agreed a range of issues for inclusion in the LAA, and how the Partnership should be organized to deliver these over the next three years. The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council represented the Council at that meeting of the Partnership Forum, and the Epping Forest LSP was represented by its Vice-Chairman (Councillor Mrs. A. Grigg).
5. The new LAA will contain those issues that emerged as the highest priorities at the Forum meeting, and targets will be set at district and sub-district levels where required. The LAA will also contain a range of performance indicators derived from the new National Outcome and Indicator Set (subject of a separate report elsewhere in this agenda). Performance targets for some of the national indicators will be negotiated through the new LAA, and LSPs at the single tier or county council level will agree up to 35 targets from among the Outcome and Indicator Set with the Government, complemented by statutory targets on educational attainment.

6. The first draft version of the new LAA, entitled 'Liberating Potential', has now been circulated for comment by the Essex Partnership Forum, and will form the basis of further debate at its next meeting on 15 April 2008. The draft LAA suggests priorities and appropriate measures of performance against these, although it should be noted that the draft agreement does not yet show any baseline data or targets, although the process by which these will be developed is explained later in this report. It is intended that the new LAA will be formally agreed and adopted by Essex County Council at its full council meeting on 6 May 2008.

7. The timeframe within which the development of the LAA is to be completed is very tight, and the Essex Partnership Forum is seeking comments on the first draft version of the LAA by 28 March 2008 (with initial feedback required by 11 February 2008 to inform the first meeting of the Essex Management Board on 22 February). The timing of the process is driven by the need to negotiate LAA targets with the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government, although the Partnership Forum feels confident that this task is achievable in the time available. The circulation of the draft LAA is the starting point for a number of processes:

- (a) GO-East will respond to the draft by suggesting their own priorities and performance measures;
- (b) LSPs should consider whether the priorities and measures set out in the draft LAA effectively articulate their community vision of place;
- (c) individual partner organisations should consider the draft LAA priorities, and identify those indicators that they feel able to 'have regard to'; and
- (d) thematic strategic partnerships will provide guidance on targets for each priority.

8. These processes must be completed by the end of March 2008 in readiness for final discussions with GO-East and for papers to be prepared for the Essex Partnership Forum meeting.

9. The Essex Partnership Forum wishes to issue a refreshed draft of the LAA in time for the Essex Management Board meeting in February, to include a preliminary indication of the priorities that individual partner organisations wish to 'have regard to'. This is a particularly important statutory feature of the second LAA and is defined as follows:

- (a) the priority must feature in the partner's business planning and performance management arrangements;
- (b) resource allocation must address the priority;
- (c) the partner must provide performance information to relevant LSPs and thematic partnerships;
- (d) performance targets of senior staff must reflect the priority targets;
- (e) the priority must be communicated to all staff; and
- (f) partners will consider whether additional value can be added by more effective use of existing resources or partnership working (this last bullet point represents a local addition to the definition agreed by the Partnership Forum).

10. The Corporate Executive Forum has recently considered the priorities that the Council might wish to 'have regard to' in terms of the new LAA, and these are detailed in Appendix 1 for consideration by the Cabinet.

11. An important difference from the first LAA is that targets will be set at district and sub-

district level. The Essex Partnership Forum intends that Essex County Council and the district/borough councils in the county, as well as LSPs and other Essex partnership organisations, will work together on this over the next few weeks and months, and the County Council has established an officer network to drive forward this process and coordinate the development of LAA targets for individual district areas.

12. The Cabinet is requested to consider the following issues in relation to the draft Essex LAA:

- (a) the selection of priorities;
- (b) whether proposed indicators are appropriate and measurable;
- (c) whether the LAA should contain targets relating to specific social groups or sub-district hotspots; and
- (d) which indicators the Council wishes to formally 'have regard to'.

13. The Epping Forest LSP and other relevant partner organisations such as the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) have also considered these issues, in order to participate fully in this consultative process in relation to the development of the new LAA, and ensure that priorities effectively articulate the local 'Story of Place'. The LSP and PCT have considered the draft LAA in terms of the issues set out at paragraph 10 above, and the Deputy Chief Executive will report the results of this process.

#### **Statement in Support of Recommended Action:**

14. To enable the Cabinet to consider a first draft version of the second LAA for Essex, in order to agree the priorities set out within the draft agreement that the Council wishes to specifically 'have regard to', and to identify any additional local targets for possible inclusion.

#### **Other Options for Action:**

15. None. The Council is statutorily required to participate and cooperate in the development of the LAA. The Corporate Executive Forum has identified proposed LAA priorities the Council should specifically 'have regard to'.

#### **Consultation Undertaken:**

16. The draft version of the LAA has been considered by the Corporate Executive Forum, and the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council have attended relevant meetings of the Essex Partnership Forum. The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder has been consulted in relation to the content and recommendations of this report.

#### **Resource Implications:**

**Budget/Personnel Provision:** The Council's contribution to the development of the second Essex LAA will be met from within existing Performance Management Unit resources.

**Land:** Nil.

**Council Plan/BVPP Reference:** Council Plan Section 8 – 'How We Measure Our Achievements'.

**Relevant Statutory Powers:** None.

**Background Papers:** None.

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** Nil.

**Key Decision Reference (if required):** Not a Key Decision.